

TRUMAN ASSERTS VOTE IS 'MANDATE'

Discounts the Narrow Edge
for Kennedy—Predicts
Decisive Leadership

By HARRY S. TRUMAN

North American Newspaper Alliance © 1960,
by Harry S. Truman. Reproduction
of this article in whole or in
part is forbidden without
written authorization.

The free world has every reason to take heart at the decision of the American people to choose John F. Kennedy as their new President.

I believe that not only our own people but people everywhere can expect a new surge of dynamic, decisive and productive leadership from this country. For one thing we are about to have a President in the White House together with a working majority in Congress who belong to the same political party.

Historically, the margin of victory a candidate for President gets under our system of government is of little importance. When a President is elected, he automatically has a mandate from all the people and he becomes the President of all the people, regardless of the size of his victory or the distribution of the popular or electoral votes which put him in office.

Lest we forget, two of our greatest Presidents were elected for their first terms by a minority of the popular votes, although they had a majority of the electoral votes. They were Abraham Lincoln and Woodrow Wilson.

This point needs to be made perfectly clear because there are some who seem to believe that, although Mr. Kennedy received a majority of the popu-

lar vote, he failed to get a mandate from the people because of the narrow margin of his popular majority. He was elected by a majority and is the President of the United States.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Kennedy actually received not only a greater number of votes than his principal opponent, but a large majority of the electoral vote.

Every four years a hue and cry is raised in some quarter about the seeming anachronism of the mechanism of the Electoral College, and the need for abolishing it—leaving the election of the President to the popular vote in the nation.

I think it would be a mistake to abolish the Electoral College. The Electoral College may seem more ceremonial than useful. But as a matter of fact it is one of the most important checks and balances we have to keep the larger states and the concentrated industrial populations from ever nullifying the role and influence of the states with smaller populations. This is the Government of the United States—fifty sovereign states.

As it stands today, no combination of the larger states can impose their choice on the other states, even if all of the larger states could get together for such a purpose. If the large states ever should get such an idea, they would still have to seek the support of a number of the smaller states, without whose aid they could not achieve their purpose.

Benefits of Narrow Margin

I believe, too, that there is something to be said for the narrow margin of victory in a Presidential election. It makes the new President realize in a very dramatic and material way that there is more than one side to a question. And where there are two strong major parties, there are bound to be reasonable differences of opinion on many issues and conflicts of interest.

The problem of leadership in the White House is to confront and resolve those differences to the best interest of all the people, without compromising on the basic party platform and philosophy of the victorious party.

The fact that more than 30,000,000 people expressed their preference for another candidate in the election of Nov. 8 and failed to elect him does not deprive them of their right to be heard. The election of Kennedy is just as important as those of the victorious millions.

This is the strength and greatness of our system, since our

Government derives its authority from all the people. It must, therefore, represent all the people.

And the real test of leadership in the White House is determined by how well a President can make his purposes and policies understood by the people, and in how he succeeds in persuading them to join him in this course of action.

This has been invariably true with all our great Presidents. I have had a good look at Senator Kennedy from the day I expressed my reservations about him before the Democratic Convention nominated him. I must confess that I was not converted to him overnight, when at first I tried to assess his capacity in terms of the tasks that would confront the next President. I was not concerned about the compatibility of the person of John Kennedy with me.

I sought to discern something of the inner man in John Kennedy. And it is my opinion that the new President-elect has in him the qualities and elements of strength and purpose to live up in every important way to the call of the office of the President.

He will need the support of all our people for he will take office at a difficult time with many perilous tasks confronting him.

He will need the support of our friends and allies abroad, and the understanding and confidence that he will bring to them a closer relationship, and a clearer conception of our common interests and problems

tration. There are times in the affairs of our Government during crises where political partisanship is harmful and out of place.

The President is first of all the head of a Government of all the people. I foresee that one of the benefits of the election will be a greater unity of the American people when facing the world. But at the same time we have greater party responsibility in carrying out the pledges and promises of the party platform as outlined in the campaign.

I look to a more orderly conduct of policies with respect to fiscal affairs and the control of inflation. Neither business nor labor nor the consumer has any need for concern about what to expect from the new Administration in the handling of finances. Quite to the contrary, I think they have a good chance to get some important improvements.

I must admit that some of the results in the farm states puzzle me. The farmers did not seem to understand the program proposed by Senator Kennedy designed to check the continuing decline in the prosperity of the farmer and the breaking up of the family farm. I think it will be up to the new Administration to persuade the farmers to give the new program a fair trial.

I am sure that the new President, despite the disappointing farm vote, will do a great deal to bring relief to the farmers of this country—just as I am sure he intends to see that the important planks of the party platform are carried out.

Turning Point at Houston

Looking back at the campaign, which I followed closely, it seems to me that the critical point came when John Kennedy met the religious issue head-on, at the meeting of Baptist clergymen at Houston, Tex.

I thought his performance there was excellent. His forthrightness and courage and his plea for tolerance under very difficult circumstances did much to remove the hurdle of religious bigotry in the Presidential campaign of 1960.

The imposition of a religious test in some parts of the country through opposition to a candidate of the Catholic faith was in direct violation of Article VI of the Constitution. And it is about time that the unwritten ban was removed.

In my judgment, this election of Kennedy brings about the historic surmounting of the religious impediment of a Catholic in the choice of a President. It is as significant as the abolition of slavery and the restoration of the rights of citizenship to secessionists of the South after the War Between the States.

I think the debates between the candidates—which were in reality not debates but press conferences—constituted another major turning point in the political fortunes of the

I see in the President-elect a man dedicated to the betterment of the lot of man and the preservation of freedom and of peace. I see in him a man with vision and energy to pursue new ways and methods to achieve them.

And I hope that our antagonists in the Communist world will take a good look at him, too.

For they may be certain that, as President, John F. Kennedy will not fail to make clear to them where he and the people of the United States stand on all the critical issues that are threatening the peace of the world.

They would do well not to discount his sincerity when he expresses the historic idealism of the United States.

The Communists ought to understand that we mean what we say when we say it and that we intend to act if it is necessary for us to act.

Calls For Bipartisanship

We shall be looking to the new President to restore the kind of bipartisanship in foreign affairs that was initiated by Franklin D. Roosevelt and practiced during my Adminis-

Kennedy, to no surprise of those who knew him, took command right from the start in presenting himself and the issues as the stronger and the less artful of the two men. His performance on TV was as convincing as his appearance before the Baptists in Houston.

I think that the crisis in Cuba and the close proximity of the Communist base influenced the election in some states, primarily those bordering the Gulf of Mexico. The state of Florida was a notable exception to this reaction — and I think Florida will have a second thought about this.

As we are getting over the hurdles of some of our prejudices, I hope that one day in the not too distant future we will not hesitate to nominate and elect a worthy man for the Presidency from the South.

And I must say that the country is fortunate to have a man of Lyndon Johnson's great qualities of leadership and knowledge of the function of our Government associated with the new President.

I think John F. Kennedy will make a good President. I would not have been for him if I had not thought so.